
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6053

AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD TRAUMA.

SUMMARY:

This bill increases state and local officials' responsibilities to respond to acts of family violence by:

1. requiring police and other peace officers (a) at the scene of a family violence incident to give the victim information specifically about a regional domestic violence organization that provides services by licensed, professional counselors trained in providing trauma-informed care and (b) to make oral reports to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as soon as possible after they have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected (as mandated reporters, police officers are already required to do this);
2. requiring, rather than permitting, the Judicial Branch's local family violence intervention counselors, trainees, and supervisors to disclose to DCF otherwise-confidential information indicating that a defendant poses a threat or danger to a child or child's parent;
3. requiring DCF social worker trainees to complete training in the prevention, identification, and effect of family violence before DCF assigns them a caseload;
4. adding the provision of trauma-informed care to the functions of family violence intervention units contract with victim service providers; and
5. making acts of dating violence between students a form of bullying.

For the bill's purposes, "trauma-informed care" means services directed by a thorough understanding of the neurological, biological, psychological, and social effects of trauma and violence on the individual.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011

BACKGROUND

School Bullying

Under existing law, school bullying consists of any overt acts by a student or group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate, or intimidate the other student. It can occur while on school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity, or on a school bus, and applies when it happens to a student more than once in a school year. Anti-bullying policies may include bullying outside of school that has a direct, negative impact on the targeted student's academic performance or safety in school.

School boards are required to have anti-bullying policies that allow students to file anonymous reports and parents to file written reports of suspected bullying. School administrators must act on every report and have a range of options available by law and policy. They must keep records of the frequency of bullying reports and how they handled them.

Local Family Violence Intervention Units

The Judicial Branch has established family violence intervention units in many of its local courts. These units must:

1. accept family violence referrals from judges and prosecutors,
2. prepare written or oral reports for court hearings,
3. provide or arrange for services for victims and offenders,
4. administer provider contracts, and
5. establish centralized reporting procedures.

Related Bill

sSB 1138, reported favorably by the Education Committee, expands the definition of school bullying, requires school districts and school officials to take additional measures to respond to it, and requires annual training for all school employees in how to identify, intervene in, and prevent bullying.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 0 (03/22/2011)